

THE REIGN OF RUFFIANISM.

SOUTHERN CHIVALRY.

A WOMAN'S STORY.

Without claiming any distinction as a martyr, I wish to make a plain statement of the facts respecting my arrest and confinement in the jail at Charleston, S. C., during the months of October and November last, which I feel is due to many friends who have kindly interested themselves in my behalf, and who are desirous of more satisfactory information concerning my case.

I left New-York for Charleston on the first day of December, 1859; when I arrived in the latter city, I was not aware of any ill-feeling or prejudice against the Northern people, but I soon learned of cruel outrages and violent threats against strangers from the North, and these called forth the indignation I could not always conceal, as I was quite unprepared for such developments in a civilized community. For this reason I confined myself quietly and closely to my business, seeking no acquaintances.

I had gone thither with the most peaceable and friendly intentions, harboring no purpose of meddling with local institutions, though my sentiments were by no means favorable to Slavery. I was very careful to hold no conversation with any of the colored people; they knew nothing of me, and I was an utter stranger to them all, and should have remained so had not the persecution I suffered given me notoriety. I never forced my opinions on any one, but when asked what I thought of Slavery I always told them the truth in a friendly spirit, disclaiming all intention of interfering with them. I had too much respect for them to suppose they could respect a pandering hypocrite, and I, therefore, told them my sentiments which were the result of early education. I admitted that their education and habits made it natural for us to differ on the question of Slavery; and, on their side, they appeared to have no suspicion of me. The summer passed thus quietly away, and I had no more fear there than if I had been living in my Northern home.

It was on the 7th of September that, as I was alone in my room, having hardly recovered from a severe illness, a large and coarse man presented himself before me without permission or announcement. He demanded my name; I told him, and asked what he wished. He stated that he was one of the Vigilant Police, and ordered me to go with him to the Mayor's Court, that officer having sent for me. I said I would not go, and asked him what right he had to insult and molest me; whether he had any written authority to demand my presence. He said No. Then followed this conversation:—

"What does the Mayor want of me?"
"I understand you are an Abolitionist."
"Yes, and what of that?"
"You must come with me or I will take you by force," said he, angrily.

I considered for a moment, and decided on the whole it was best to go with him quietly. I thought it probable the Mayor had been inspired upon by some idle reports, and that after hearing what I had to say, he would dismiss me with an apology for being the occasion of this unwelcome intrusion. I immediately made myself ready, and went with the man to the Guard House. I was ushered into the common Court room, where several idlers were assembled, who seemed to have no other business than to await my coming, but the Mayor was not there. I waited an hour, expecting every moment he would make his appearance, those around me in the mean time whispering among themselves, though they said nothing to me. I took no notice of them, but began to get very impatient for my expected interview. A ruffian-looking man soon came in carrying a large bunch of keys. "Step this way, Madam," said he. I followed him without the least apprehension, supposing the Mayor would be respectful enough to hear me in his own room rather than before a crowd, for I had done nothing, and had nothing to fear. I was led through two or three large rooms, and through an infirmary, where there were several sick people in bed.

"Where are you going?" said I to the man. "This way, Madam," said he, opening a door that led by a flight of steps to a long, dark passage; on each side were the underground cells. I looked around me. Two or three rough looking fellows stood by me ready to do the jailer's bidding, while he opened one of these dirty, dismal cells.

"Come down," said he, "and go in there." I asked, in surprise, "what does this mean?" "It means that you are to be put in here; it is the Mayor's order." I was thrust in and locked up. Shortly after, the same man opened the door and wished me to give my name in full. I told him I should not answer his questions; I wished to see the Mayor immediately. He said I must wait until I was called for, and then locked the door. I saw no one again that day. Night came—

"Oh, I grew sick and faint from breathing the foul air; I had scarcely recovered from recent sickness. The poor wretches dragged in from the streets, screaming and groaning, were thrown in cells around me, from which I was separated only by a thin board partition. No place could be more painfully disagreeable to pass a night in than that.

I knocked on the door to attract the attention of the jailer as he was passing; he opened the door, and asked what I wanted. I told him I wanted to get out of that place, and asked him if he would put me in a decent room; no, the Mayor had left strict orders that I should be kept there until he chose to see me, when I asked the man to take a note or message to some of my friends or acquaintances, as I needed some relief; he said: "This place is as good as the other cells, and you have got to stay here. You have reason to fear something worse than death may happen to you. Your sentiments don't suit the people here." I told him to go away and lock the door, as I would not hear another word from him. He left then without any more words, and I saw no one again that night.

In the morning, a pail of water was put in the cell, but nothing else. At 2 o'clock the door was unlocked by an officer, who told me the Mayor was ready to see me. There were many people stationed along the passages, but they did not say a word as I walked through to the Mayor's room, which was filled with respectable-looking men.

The Mayor read the charges he had written down. No witness was called; no one appeared against me. The examination was as follows:—

"Mrs. Botteford, you are accused of treason and sedition."
"I am not guilty of treason or sedition."
"I understand you have been tampering with slaves?"
"It is utterly false, Sir, I have had nothing to say to the slaves."

"You are an Abolitionist?"
"Yes."
"An admirer of John Brown?"
"Yes."

"You have expressed Abolition sentiments?"
"I have on a few occasions when asked; I can name all I ever conversed with, and what I said to them I will say here. I lived here nearly a year, attending closely to my own business; I have not injured or offended any one, and have been well treated until now; I cannot see why I should be subjected to this outrage."

"You say you have been well treated?"
"Yes, until now."
"Then I think you have been very ungrateful; you have been well treated, been profitably employed, and have received our money while you have done us no harm."

"I have not hated the people; I am no friend to Slavery; I have not seen anything in Charleston to give me a more favorable impression of it; quite otherwise, I have paid for all I have had here, I have received what I have earned. I owe you no gratitude."

"I would advise you to go home."
"I shall certainly do so as soon as I can settle my business. I have no desire to stay a moment longer."

The Mayor then said he had not heard anything against my character. "You are spoken of," said he, "as quiet and respectable. But I require bail for your good conduct. If you can find any one to be your bail for three hundred dollars, I can dismiss you."

I told him I had not been guilty of any bad conduct, and could not get any bail. He then left the room with one or two more. As I afterward learned, he was persuaded I was an enemy for some Northern society or publisher. I saw no more of him. He sent the key in; I was ordered to the cell again, and locked up. Some of my friends from the house I left behind, and had been several times to inquire for me, but could get no satisfactory answer, and were rudely driven away.

In an hour or so an officer opened the door, and said I must go with him, as the Mayor had given me over to the State's Attorney. We crossed the Citadel Park to the office of Magistrate Kaneaux. Twenty or thirty citizens were gathered there and among them one whom I was acquainted with, and had conversed with about two weeks before. I spoke to him, and asked him if he was the complainant. He said he was. I indignantly asked him if he was not ashamed of himself; if it was possible he could do anything so contemptible. Without waiting for his reply the Magistrate answered for him: "This man has done perfectly right; I should have done just so myself; why, if you had been a man you would have been hung up on one of the trees in the Park; you would never have got here alive." I asked very calmly, if any one wanted my life. No, the Magistrate said; as I was a woman my life might be spared. But the Mayor had been too lenient; he had raised my bail to \$2,000, in default of which I must go to jail. I told him it made no difference about the amount of the bail; I was not a criminal, and I needed no bail.

"Are you not an Abolitionist?"
"Yes, I am."
"You are charged with treason and sedition, and tampering with slaves?"
"All these charges are utterly false; I have said nothing to the slaves; they do not know me."
"Do you hold correspondence North, and receive papers and letters?"
"Only from my nearest friends a few letters, no papers."

"Do you not read THE TRIBUNE?"
"No; because I cannot get it here; I should read it if I could get it."

"You need not answer all my questions; you may commit yourself."

"No fear of that, Sir; I am perfectly willing to answer your questions; there is nothing to conceal."

He then asked many more—when I had lived in New-York; where I had lived, and what I had been doing? I answered all readily. Then I asked civilly, if he would allow me to ask him some questions. Who had said I had tampered with slaves? I had never held any conversation in their hearing. No; he could not believe me then, nor before these, pointing to those around him.

"I told him I should not ask my bail."

"Well, go to jail; you cannot speak here; my officer is waiting to take you to jail."

I walked through the streets by the side of the constable to the jail, which was at some distance; during this time two men were sent to search my room; they broke open my trunks and bundles, unrolled every parcel, trying to find papers or letters; but they found nothing they wanted, though they carried off one or two of my letters. When I got to the jail I was faint and exhausted; it was now 6 o'clock on the second day; I had not had a morsel of food for nearly forty-eight hours. I sent to my friends at the house, which had not been allowed to see me before, though she had tried repeatedly. If she had not come just then, I should not have had anything until the next day, when the prison attendants would have served. The jailer had strict orders to show me no favors; I was to be lodged with the common prisoners of the female ward; no one outside the walls was allowed to give me aid or comfort. I was to remain here four months, and then take my trial for treason and sedition. The jailer told me I must take leave of my friends, and go to my quarters with the rest, as he was to lock the jail for the night. The lady asked him if I should be comfortable? He said yes; I should fare like the rest; he could make no distinction without orders. So then I was to be a prisoner again, and not alone, but with such poor creatures as are the usual inmates of such places; two drunken, abandoned women, were to occupy the room with me.

This is a jail, Madam, said the jailer, as he opened the door of the miserable cell; you cannot expect much here. I thought he was indeed right; there was not the least comfort of any kind, not an article of furniture; nothing but a dirty blanket on the floor to sleep on. Looked in here with such company, with the roar of the blood hounds that were howled for the night to guard the yard, with the yelling and shrieking of the male prisoners, I passed another terrible night. I am certain I could not have endured all the privations of this place had the orders of the magistrates been strictly carried out.

The Sheriff visited the jail after two or three days. He was quite a different man, and seemed anxious to do all he could for me; I afterward had a room to myself, and my friends were permitted to send me such articles of furniture as I needed, from the place where I had lived. He also allowed the Sisters of Charity to visit me, who, with one other lady, daily supplied my wants, and made me as comfortable as I could be in that situation. To these good women I feel that I owe my life. They used their influence to effect my release, procured me counsel, and did all they could to serve me; they also sent one of their friends, with a petition for my release, to the State Attorney, Judge Wayne, but he would not listen to it. A German gentleman offered to procure bail, and spoke more warmly in my behalf than it suited these honest gentlemen to hear. No amount of bail would now be offered, they said; I should stay in jail and stand my trial. Before night four wretches were out for their arrest; he had to leave even his clothing, and stand out of the city, or he too would have gone to jail.

As for myself, I sent no petition, wanted no favors. But justice and my liberty I demanded. The Rev. Dr. Howe of St. Philip's Church visited me with Judge Pringle, on hearing I was a member of his church. They said they were sorry to see me a prisoner, asking, "Why are you here, and what have you done?" I told them my story, and that I was there on a charge of treason and sedition, which was most ridiculous, as well as false; the treason was on their own part, not on mine.

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"Yes."

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"Oh, no," I answered; "it is quite useless to try to persuade me that I have been guilty of anything like that; I know what treason and sedition are as well as you. I know what the Constitutional laws of our country are; I claim their protection. You are accountable to them; you are not out of the Union yet."

"Well, we have slaves, and we mean to keep them; I own them myself. We are irresponsible deputies; you must know; we have laws here that strictly forbid any such expressions as you have made."

"Such laws are nothing to me; let those obey them that choose to. I am no slave, if you claim to be despots. I have my rights, and mean to have them respected."

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"I told him I should not ask my bail."

"Well, go to jail; you cannot speak here; my officer is waiting to take you to jail."

I walked through the streets by the side of the constable to the jail, which was at some distance; during this time two men were sent to search my room; they broke open my trunks and bundles, unrolled every parcel, trying to find papers or letters; but they found nothing they wanted, though they carried off one or two of my letters. When I got to the jail I was faint and exhausted; it was now 6 o'clock on the second day; I had not had a morsel of food for nearly forty-eight hours. I sent to my friends at the house, which had not been allowed to see me before, though she had tried repeatedly. If she had not come just then, I should not have had anything until the next day, when the prison attendants would have served. The jailer had strict orders to show me no favors; I was to be lodged with the common prisoners of the female ward; no one outside the walls was allowed to give me aid or comfort. I was to remain here four months, and then take my trial for treason and sedition. The jailer told me I must take leave of my friends, and go to my quarters with the rest, as he was to lock the jail for the night. The lady asked him if I should be comfortable? He said yes; I should fare like the rest; he could make no distinction without orders. So then I was to be a prisoner again, and not alone, but with such poor creatures as are the usual inmates of such places; two drunken, abandoned women, were to occupy the room with me.

This is a jail, Madam, said the jailer, as he opened the door of the miserable cell; you cannot expect much here. I thought he was indeed right; there was not the least comfort of any kind, not an article of furniture; nothing but a dirty blanket on the floor to sleep on. Looked in here with such company, with the roar of the blood hounds that were howled for the night to guard the yard, with the yelling and shrieking of the male prisoners, I passed another terrible night. I am certain I could not have endured all the privations of this place had the orders of the magistrates been strictly carried out.

The Sheriff visited the jail after two or three days. He was quite a different man, and seemed anxious to do all he could for me; I afterward had a room to myself, and my friends were permitted to send me such articles of furniture as I needed, from the place where I had lived. He also allowed the Sisters of Charity to visit me, who, with one other lady, daily supplied my wants, and made me as comfortable as I could be in that situation. To these good women I feel that I owe my life. They used their influence to effect my release, procured me counsel, and did all they could to serve me; they also sent one of their friends, with a petition for my release, to the State Attorney, Judge Wayne, but he would not listen to it. A German gentleman offered to procure bail, and spoke more warmly in my behalf than it suited these honest gentlemen to hear. No amount of bail would now be offered, they said; I should stay in jail and stand my trial. Before night four wretches were out for their arrest; he had to leave even his clothing, and stand out of the city, or he too would have gone to jail.

As for myself, I sent no petition, wanted no favors. But justice and my liberty I demanded.